A Paſtoral Reflection ON DEATH. A POEM.

——Omnes una manet Nox,
Et calcanda ſemel via Lethi. Hor.

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DEAR NED,

AN Old Friend is the beſt Mecænas, *that makes me chuſe you before any Poetical Lord or Eſquire, and I believe this Reflection will prove too Melancholy for the Town, where Men make it their Buſineſs to forget Mortality. For theſe Reaſons, I have ſent this Poem to you in the Country, where much Leiſure and an honeſt Retirement will permit you to enjoy the Meditation. Nothing here goes off but* Satyr, *for our good natur'd Age, is mightily in love with a* Muſe *that's born with Teeth, though ſuch Births have always been eſteem'd Ominous, and is very fond of Men that come into the World, like Briers to ſcratch and tear all about them. I cannot deny but Obſcenity has its good liking: But I ſhould be very unwilling to make my Court that way, for I am much of the* Spaniſh *Ladys Mind, who dreaded to be delivered down to Poſterity for a Whore, though to a King. You had not been troubled with this* Poem *in Print, if moſt of it had not been put out before in a Book of* Miſcellanies, *but it was ſo blemiſhed by the Preſs, that its ill uſage moved the Compaſſion of Strangers, which encouraged me to reſcue it from its Deformity, and to add a ſecond Part. But after all, if it will divert you when you want a News-Letter or a* Gazette, *it is as much as is expected by*

Dear Ned,

Yours.

A Paſtoral Reflection ON DEATH.

Strephon and *Damon.*

BEneath a gloomy Yews unhealthy Shade,
Whoſe noxious Covert's ſhun'd by Bird and Beaſt,
The wretched *Damon* lay with Arms a-croſs
His labouring Breaſt, quick like a ſickly Pulſe,
His Heart with Paſſion ſeem'd to throb and beat,
Out of his half-clos'd Eyes there ſtole a Tear
Along the Sallow Furrows of his Cheeks,
The deep ingraven Characters of Grief.
The Pipe which he with Tuneful Breath inſpir'd,
And made the Vocal Organ of his Lays,
Fell broke, and ſilent, by the dire effect
Of raging Sorrow, for in that was loſt
The Wonder and Delight of all the Plains.

As *Strephon* chanc'd to ſhape his Courſe that way,

In Queſt of two loſt Ewes that lately ſtray'd,
He ſpy'd the Shepherd ſtretch'd upon the Ground.
Amaz'd at the ſad ſpectacle of Woe,
He ſilent ſtood; then, *Damon, Damon*, cry'd;
When thus provoked, he rais'd his weary Head,
That ſtreight recoil'd, and gently ſunk to reſt,
At laſt with's *Elbow* pillow'd from the Ground,
He gave Attention to his Speaking Friend.

STREPHON.

What makes my *Damon* ſecretly Retire?
Reſolv'd in private to poſſeſs his Grief,
When *Damon's* Sheep require their *Damons* Care?
Laſt Night I heard the Wolves run howling by,
With their fierce Eyes devouring all our Flocks,
Their Fear above their Hunger ſcarce prevail'd;
For two Lambs in my view they almoſt ſeiz'd.
In yonder Village too, I heard this Day,
That Thieves have lately viſited our Folds.
Riſe *Damon*, riſe, and leave thy Cares behind.

DAMON.

All this will not provoke my Diligence;
For far more rav'nous *Wolves* have ſeiz'd on me,
And make my panting Heart their wretched Prey,
That vainly ſtrives to ſhift the cruel Pain.
My Breaſt was nev'r infeſted with *wild Care*

As

As long as dear *Myrtillo* liv'd, whoſe *Charms*
Cou'd calm the rougheſt *Tempeſt* of my Mind.
A diſcontinu'd Sun-ſhine I enjoy'd,
Till dear *Myrtillo* ſet in his dark Grave.
Now there's no lucid Interval of Peace,
Or pauſe of *Quiet* to my troubled *Mind*.
Sad Death muſt be the Period of my Woe
And Life, then *Damon*, like *Myrtillo*, Dye.

STREPHON.

Thy Soul, *fond Shepherd*, is with Paſſion craz'd,
And thy diſtemper'd Reaſon falſly takes
The dreadful *King of Terrors* for thy Friend;
Shou'd he but lay his Icy Hand on thee,
Affrighted *Nature* would recant the wiſh
Which you in Trouble made with too much haſte;
And like the Graſs before the Mowers Sythe,
Wou'd bending, try to 'ſcape the *fatal Stroke*.
If *Death*'s ſo pleaſant, why ſhou'd you lament
Myrtillo's Fate?

DAMON.

Alas! the lovely Youth
Wou'd willingly have ſuffer'd tedious Life.
The ſtrong *Convulſions* of his Friendſhip were
More fierce than the laſt Agonies of Death;
His parting Soul by ling'ring here below,

Did

Did ſeem to catch at *Life* to ſtay with me.
But when reſiſtleſs *Fate* had ſummon'd him,
He kindly fix'd his cloſing Eyes on mine,
Then beckon'd me to follow to the Grave.
This makes me think 'tis no hard Task to Dye,
For harmleſs Shepherds, whoſe unſpotted Lives
Are innocent, as are the Flocks they feed.
Fear is but the Reſult of Guilt.

STREPHON.

I Know
Death has his *Terrors* chiefly from our *Crimes*,
And *Vertue* can diſarm the *Gaſtly Foe*;
Yet *Nature* too ſtill fears to be diſſolv'd,
Like tender *Lambs* that dread the *Butcher's Knife*,
Although they nothing fear beyond the *Blow*.
For who can boaſt a perfect *Innocence*,
Or run the nimble Race of humane Life,
Always along a ſpotleſs milky-way?
There's no ſuch Path but in the Heavens above,
VVhich we at Penning-time ſo plainly ſee.
Methinks I tremble whilſt I talk of *DEATH*,
Am almoſt frighted with my own Diſcourſe.
Thus I anticipate the *Fatal Hour*
That muſt ſnatch me from chaſt *Dorinda's* Arms,
And the dear Pledges of our Mutual Love.

When

When I am Dead, who'll teach my lovely *Boys*
To uſe the *Hook*, or help the *labouring Ewe*?
Dorinda, with my *Boys*, and *Sheep*, muſt all
Be left a Prey to *Man*, who ſtill to Man
Proves the moſt ſavage VVolf. The ſtrong
VVorry the weak, remorſleſs Avarice,
Urging the hungry Miſer to Oppreſs,
And wild *Ambition* Treads upon the Poor,
Bad footing ſure; and that which will ſubvert
But ill-laid Greatneſs of aſpiring Man.
Such Thoughts as theſe *Myrtillo* had, when Life
Did, as you ſay, ſeem pleaſing to the Youth.

DAMON.

VVhy wou'd you abrogate my firm Reſolve,
And with thoſe Fears repeal the thoughts of *Death*?
Did you but know how ſweetly they Repoſe
On Beds of Earth that are Lodg'd under Ground.
Uninterrupted Reſt they all enjoy,
And with the want of Life are bleſt by *Death*:
They but Retreat to a far greater VVorld.
For how few tread the Surface of the Globe,
Compar'd to crowding Colonies that Fate
Sends daily to the Bowels of the Earth,
That has been peopling ever ſince *old Time*
Commenc'd the Subterranean Univerſe,
Still gapes to ſwallow down the upper VVorld.
But when my Body's earthen Pitcher's broke

By Nature's ſtroke, or Fortune's random blow;
My Soul, like *Gideon's* Lamp, from its crack'd Urn,
Shall Death's *Black Night* turn to *Eternal Day*;
For all the Spots of my poor ſullied Soul
Shall be waſh'd off by Heavens Eternal Lamb,
VVhoſe tender Veins ſpouted a *Bath of Blood*,
(The ſacred Laver of all faithful Swains.)
I well remember dear *Mirtillo's* Song
VVith which he us'd to chear his doubtful Soul
Before ſhe took her laſt Eternal Flight.

A Penitential ODE.

I.

TEar off the Strings, undreſs the ſpeaking Lyre,
Let nought but Groans her Breaſt inſpire,
Her Grief all common Sorrow muſt ſurpaſs,
For ſhe, Alas!
Her Maſters Crimes muſt now bewail,
In ſounds, I hope, that will prevail.
In well-ſet *Sighs*, and *Tears*, I'll try
(Such Waters will befriend their Harmony)
To make my *Penitential MELODY*.
At my firſt Groan kind *Angels* Sing,
Glad of my *Pious Suffering*.
For whilſt I *Weep*, whilſt I *Lament*,
In *Songs* they welcome home the *hopeful Penitent*.

II.

II.

For what *Crime* ſhall my firſt *Tear* fall?
O! not for *One*, *Lord*, but for *All*.
For my *Firſt-born Iniquity*,
That had Its *Birth* into the *World* with me?
In Eight Days time that *Monſter* Dead was found,
In my *Baptiſmal Font* the *Fatal Twin* was Drown'd.
For my gray long-liv'd Errors that engage
My eaſie Youth, my ſtubborn Age,
My *Tears* ſhall flow, and try
To ſlay the num'rous *Progeny*,
That like their Parent, they may in the Waters Dye.
But if they ride
In Triumph, on that weaker Tide,
I'll borrow an auxiliary Flood
Of our great *Shepherds precious Blood*.
VVith that *reſiſtleſs Torrent* I'll confound
Th' *Egyptian Hoſt* of *Sin* in that *Red-Sea* they're drown'd,

III.

Bring all her *Strings*, new dreſs the *ſpeaking Lyre*,
And with glad *Notes* her *Breaſt* inſpire,
E're ſhe is ready, let it not be long,
The great *JEHOVA* claims her *Song*:
See how her *Strings* about my Fingers croud,
And how they preſs to tell my *Joy* aloud.
As jointly we *Rejoice*,
The Heavens, and Earth, reflect the Image of our Voice.

STREPHON.

STREPHON.

When you ſhall tread the confines of the Grave,
And your Soul is to a ſtrange *ſomwhere* bound,
(For *Nature* ſtill will combate lively *Faith*)
Tis great Relief to have ſuch chearful hopes
'That will repreſs the Horrors of the Mind:
We only by the Opticks of our *Fatith*
Can travel to the *Promis'd Land* above.
Yet we muſt not precipitate our *Fate*,
But wait Heaven's Leaſure, therefore (*Damon* pray)
For my ſake Live to Night, to Morrow Dye.

The Second Part.

THE faithful Shepherds Care renews with Day,
Early as Light he quits his honeſt Reſt;
No *Goblins*, made by Fancy, haunt his ſleep,
Or luſtful Heats provoke his *wanton Blood.*
Perhaps his *Phyllis* dances ov'r his Mind,
Or ſome lov'd *Lamb* plays in his harmleſs Thought,
And thus repeats the pleaſure of the Day:
As freſh and pure as Morn young *Strephon* roſe
To tend his *Flocks*, that then ſtood bleating ov'r
Their empty Cribs. But *Damon's* pungent Grief
Had made him come now earlier to the Plain.
When all things elſe are ſilent, and at reſt,
His watchful Cares prevent his wiſh'd Repoſe,
For his too faithful Memory recalls

Each

Each former Grief, and makes him once again
Distinctly suffer past Calamities.
Myrtillo dyes a Thousand times a Night,
And he with Tears as oft bedews his Herse.
He, by the wretched Witchcraft of his Woe,
With blubber'd Eyes had fascinated's *Flock*.
When *Strephon* had survey'd the sad estate
Of Sheep and Shepherd, with a gentle Sigh,
He thus began their Morning Dialogue.

STREPHON.

Damon, I thank you, since at my Request
You to the short Accompt of Life this Day
Have added, but an Earnest given, I hope,
Of more.

DAMON.

Alas! *Myrtillo* still is Dead.

STREPHON.

'Tis true, and he has rech'd the peaceful shore
Of t'other World, where he dissolving lies
In *Hallelujas*, whilst our trembling Ears,
The Trumpet, Drum, all the mad din of War,
Wound, the sad Preludes of ensuing Fate,
The dying Groans of a distemper'd State.
The Wolf was the sole Rapperee we fear'd.
Now the more rav'nous humane Beasts of Prey,
Train'd up in Slaughter, Rapine, Perfidy,
Bold Martial *Satyrs*, hot with Rage and Lust
Will Butcher all our Flocks. Nor Age, nor Sex,

Will ſcape the fury of their double Heat.
Wild deſolation marches ſtill with War.

DAMON.

Is this your invitation to long Life?
Sure then 'tis beſt ſtreight to intrench in Duſt,
They can't beat up my Quarters in the Grave,
Or rudely Bomb my humble Sepulcher;
Nor can they piffer my ſtript Souls caſt Cloths,
Safely lock'd up in a deep ſleep by *Death*,
Till the laſt *Trump's* enlivening ſound ſhall raiſe
The Sluggard that has ſlept for Ages paſt.
You did not quite compleat the Catalogue
Of Miſeries that threaten tedious Life.
See how the Storms beat on the Churches Ark,
For many fierce *Euroclydons* now blow
On the ſmall Ship that wafts the Gentile Church.
But ſtill, I hope, ſhe'll ride the angry Wave,
That by its Motion mounts her nigher Heaven.

STREPHON.

You know there's not ſecurity againſt
That Wind that bears a *Tempeſt* in its Name,
By leaping over-board; then *Damon*, bear
A Mind impregnable againſt th' Aſſaults
Of Fate, or Chance; nor ſuffer black *Deſpair*
To add more Clouds to the dark lowring Sky.
When *Death* ſhall Summon all its ſullen *Train*,
And grow more dreadful by that Circumſtance.

Then

Then ſtand erect under thy adverſe *Fate*,
And neither *Fear*, or *Wiſh*, to breath thy laſt.
As our *Great Sidney*, that *Arcadian* Swain,
That always won the Prizes of the Plain,
Puſh'd on by Honour to his early *Fate*,
Appeas'd the mortal Anguiſh of his Wound
With Muſick: I confirm my labouring Soul
With this ſhort Lay, in my Lifes dark Eclips.
What makes my Soul to linger here,
And but to quit her Priſon fear,
Cram'd full of anxious Thoughts and Cares?
(She hugs the Load ſo ill ſhe bears.)
Vice makes us tremble when we *Dye*,
But *Virtue* baffles *Deſtiny*.
Who here a *Virtuous* Life has paſt,
May, without Sighing, Breath his laſt.

DAMON.

'Tis hard to tread the *Strait*, but *narrow Path*
Of *Vertue*, for diſtorted *Fleſh and Blood*.
Fond Love wryth's Youth, Ambition warps old Age,
The luſt of Power: Nay, all the lawleſs crew
Of Paſſions, the vile Rabble of the Mind,
Still maks an uproar in the little World,
Their lawful Sovereign, Reaſon, to *Depoſe*.
But now, I hope, ſhe'll re-aſcend her *Throne*
By *Right Divine*. Propitious Queen of Man!
Heaven puts the Scepter in thy equal Hand,

Exert

Exert thy *Power*, long be thy *boundleſs Sway*,
And let me have the pleaſure to *OBEY*.

FINIS.